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ABSTRACT

This survey, which measures the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools, is the 13th annual survey in this series. New as well as trend questions are included in this and every survey. Personal, in-home interviews of 1519 adults were conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. The survey questions addressed: major problems confronting the public schools in 1981; 1981 ratings of the public schools; how the public rates local principals and administrators; how the public rates local parents; preparing students for jobs and college; low-interest loans for college students; the voucher system; using volunteers to reduce school costs; the goals of education; the high school curriculum; subjects the public would require; special instruction areas; emphasis on high school athletics; state board examinations for teachers; tenure for teachers; teacher strikes and unionization; teacher age and effectiveness; equal educational opportunities; nationwide examination for graduation; release of exam results and comparison between schools; smoking in the public schools; parent influence in deciding school policies; and losing the lead in science and technology to Japan and Germany. (Author/BW)

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George H. Gallup

The 13th Annual Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes Toward the Public Schools

We are privileged this year to publish the 13th annual Gallup Poll on Education, cosponsored by the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, and the Charles F. Kettering Foundation. NASSP's participation comes from an invitation extended by the Institute for the Development of Educational Activities (I/D/E/A), the Kettering affiliate which sponsored the poll from 1972 to 1980.

The annual Gallup Poll serves as a kind of educational thermometer for Americans, identifying high and low temperatures on important educational issues. While some of these issues recur year after year, others reflect changing priorities and new areas of interest in schooling. The 1981 poll questions were solicited from dozens of educators across the land.

Since secondary schools serve the public, it is imperative that educators remain alert to public opinion and to shifts in public priorities for education. The Gallup Poll provides the best single source of this information on a national basis. These poll results can also serve as a catalyst to public discussion of educational issues on the local level. Questions from the poll may be used by local schools or school districts for their own polling purposes as well.

A mutual understanding with the public is critical to the success of schools today. We urge principals and other administrators to take advantage of the information contained in the 13th Annual Gallup Poll toward this end.

Scott D. Thomson
Executive Director
NASSP

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Purpose of the Study

This survey, which measures the attitudes of Americans toward their public schools, is the thirteenth annual survey in this series. Funding for this survey is currently provided by the Institute for Development of Education Activities, Inc., an affiliate of the Charles F. Kettering Foundation (/i/D/E/A/); the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP); and the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP). A great effort is made each year to deal with the issues of greatest concern both to educators and to the public. New as well as trend questions are included in this and every survey.

To be sure that the survey would embrace the most important issues in the field of education, the Kettering Foundation sent letters to educators across the nation asking for their ideas. Following this, an executive committee, including representatives of the Kettering Foundation, NAESP, NASSP, and the Gallup Organization, met to discuss issues, evaluate proposed questions, and suggest new questions for the survey.

We wish to thank all persons who contributed their ideas to this survey.

Research Procedure

The sample. The sample used in this survey embraced a total of 1,519 adults (18 years of age and older). It is described as a modified probability sample of the nation. Personal, in-home interviewing was conducted in all areas of the nation and in all types of communities. A description of the sample can be found at the end of this report.

Time of interviewing. The fieldwork for this study was carried out during the period of May 8-17, 1981.

The report. In the tables that follow, the heading "Nonpublic School Parents" includes parents of students who attend parochial schools and parents of students who attend private or independent schools.

Due allowance must be made for statistical variation, especially in the case of findings for small groups where relatively few respondents were interviewed, such as nonpublic school parents.

The findings of this report apply only to the United States as a whole and not to individual local communities. Local surveys, using the same questions, can be conducted to determine how local areas compare with the national norm.

Major Problems Confronting the Public Schools in 1981

Although discipline continues, as it has for many years, to be regarded as the number one problem facing the local public schools, a slight decline has been registered in the percentage of respondents who cite discipline as a major problem. This year, 23% of the national total include discipline in this category, compared to 26% of the national total in 1980. This decline does not show up among parents of children now attending public schools, however, and it is this group whose opinions are likely to be the best informed.

The order of mentions of other problems remains virtually the same as reported last year. Use of drugs is the second most frequently mentioned problem, and poor curriculum/low standards is in third place, followed by lack of proper financial support and difficulty of getting good teachers.

The question dealing with the most important problems as the public sees them is "open," which permits respondents to give their views without benefit of a list. This procedure offers the opportunity to discover new problems as they arise. Entering the list for the first time this year, and receiving enough mentions to put it in the top half of the list, is "Lack of respect for other students and for teachers."

What do you think are the biggest problems with which the public schools in this community must deal?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Lack of discipline	23	21	26	29
Use of drugs	15	16	13	15
Poor curriculum/ poor standards	14	13	14	12
Lack of proper financial support	12	10	16	11
Difficulty of getting good teachers	11	9	14	9
Integration/busing (combined)	11	12	9	18
Large schools/ overcrowding	5	3	7	14
Parents' lack of interest	5	6	4	4
Teachers' lack of interest	4	4	5	5
Lack of respect for other students/ teachers	4	4	6	4
Pupils' lack of interest/truancy	4	5	2	3
Crime/vandalism	3	3	2	1
Mismanagement of funds	3	2	3	6
Problems with administration	3	3	3	3
Drinking/alcoholism	2	2	1	2
Lack of proper facilities	2	2	2	3
Non-English-speaking students	1	1	1	2
Communication problems	1	1	2	1

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too many schools/ declining enrollment	1	1	2	1
Moral standards	1	1	2	1
Teachers' strikes	1	1	1	1
School board policies		1	1	1
Government interference	*	1	2	2
Parents' involvement in school activities	1	*	*	1
Transportation	*	1	*	—
There are no problems	3	1	6	1
Miscellaneous	5	5	6	3
Don't know/ no answer	12	16	5	9

Figures add to more than 100% because of multiple answers.
* Less than one-half of 1 percent.

1981 Ratings of the Public Schools

Since 1974, when this rating series was first introduced, there has been a decline in the ratings given by the public to the public schools. That decline came to a halt last year, and the 1981 survey provides further evidence that the downward trend has ended—at least for the present. There is as yet, however, no evidence of an upturn in the ratings.

The explanation for a respondent's rating may be as complex as the changing pattern of demographic, economic, and social factors affecting education—or as simple as a recent positive experience with a local school. But because many educators look to this annual rating as a telling barometer of the public's confidence in public education, it is possible that efforts to increase public understanding of what the schools are achieving may, at least in part, explain the halt in the downward trend.

Students are often given the grades A, B, C, D, and Fail to denote the quality of their work. Suppose the public schools themselves, in this community, were graded in the same way. What grade would you give the public schools here—A, B, C, D, or Fail?

	1981	1980	1979	1978	1977	1976	1975	1974
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
A rating	9	10	8	9	11	13	13	18
B rating	27	25	26	27	26	29	30	30
C rating	34	29	30	30	28	28	28	21
D rating	13	12	11	11	11	10	9	6
Fail	7	6	7	8	5	6	7	5
Don't know	10	18	18	15	19	14	13	20

Public school educators can take some comfort from the fact that parents with children now attending the public schools give these schools a substantially higher mark than do those who have no children now in school or those who are sending their children to nonpublic schools.

	Rating of the Public Schools					
By Parents With:	A	B	C	D	Fail	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Children in public school	11	35	34	10	6	4
Children in nonpublic school	6	19	37	18	12	8
No children in school	8	23	34	13	8	14

Examination of the ratings given by different groups in the population, however, reveals that younger citizens—the more recent graduates—are significantly more critical of the public schools than are their elders. In addition, residents of cities under 50,000 in population have a much higher opinion of their public schools than do people living in cities of over 1 million.

In the present survey, as well as in earlier ones, Westerners rate their schools lower than persons who live in other sections of the nation, while Southerners give their schools the highest grades.

	A	B	C	D	Fail	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
National Totals	**9**	**27**	**34**	**13**	**7**	**10**
Sex						
Men	7	28	35	13	7	10
Women	10	25	33	13	8	11
Race						
White	9	27	33	13	8	10
Nonwhite	9	24	39	13	7	8
Age						
18-29 years	4	24	42	15	8	7
30-49 years	9	30	32	14	7	8
50 years and over	12	25	30	11	7	15
Community Size						
1 million & over	5	25	33	17	9	11
500,000-999,999	11	28	29	13	11	8
50,000-499,999	6	22	38	16	7	11
2,500-49,999	15	28	31	9	7	10
Under 2,500	9	30	35	10	5	11
Central cities	5	20	38	15	12	10
Education						
Grade school	11	26	26	10	10	17
High school	7	26	36	13	8	10
College	10	28	34	15	5	8
Region						
East	7	27	33	12	9	12
Midwest	10	30	33	13	6	8
South	11	26	32	12	5	14
West	5	23	38	16	10	8

How the Public Rates Local Principals and Administrators

Principals and administrators are rated by the public almost exactly the same as the public schools are rated. If residents think well of their local public schools, apparently they tend to think well of the principals and administrators.

What grade would you give the principals and administrators in the local public schools in this community—A, B, C, D, or Fail?

	Principals and Administrators	Public Schools
	%	%
A rating	10	9
B rating	26	27
C rating	28	34
D rating	12	13
Fail	9	7
Don't know	15	10

Parents with children in public schools rate principals and administrators much higher than do both parents who send their children to nonpublic schools and those who have no children of school age. A total of 46% of those with children in public schools give an "A" or "B" rating to the principals and administrators, compared to only 29% of those with children in nonpublic schools and 32% of those who have no children in school.

Further breakdowns:

	A	B	C	D	Fail	Don't Know
	%	%	%	%	%	%
National Totals	**10**	**26**	**28**	**12**	**9**	**15**
Sex						
Men	8	25	31	13	10	13
Women	11	27	26	11	9	16
Race						
White	9	27	28	12	9	15
Nonwhite	15	23	29	12	10	11
Age						
18-29 years	6	23	36	15	8	12
30-49 years	10	30	27	11	12	10
50 years and older	13	24	24	10	8	21
Community Size						
1 million & over	4	28	34	10	12	12
500,000-999,999	11	25	22	14	13	15
50,000-499,999	8	25	29	13	8	17
2,500-49,999	18	24	22	12	7	17
Under 2,500	11	27	31	11	8	12
Central city	7	22	30	12	12	17
Education						
Grade school	14	29	15	9	9	21
High school	10	25	29	13	10	13
College	8	27	32	11	8	14
Region						
East	8	27	27	10	12	16
Midwest	10	28	32	13	7	10
South	15	25	25	10	6	19
West	5	23	30	15	13	14

How the Public Rates Local Parents

The success of the public schools is due in no small part to the kind of job parents do in rearing their children in the home to be responsible young people. It was thought, therefore, that in rating the schools and teachers it would be only fair to rate the kind of job parents are doing.

The survey results show that the public gives parents lower ratings than they do the schools themselves or their administrators. In fact, parents themselves are amazingly frank in their appraisal of the job they do.

What grade would you give parents in this community for the job they are doing in raising their children to be self-disciplined and responsible young people—A, B, C, D, or Fail?

	Rating of Public Schools	Rating of Parents	Rating of Administrators and Principals
	%	%	%
A rating	9	5	10
B rating	27	24	26
C rating	34	36	28
D rating	13	16	12
Fail	7	11	9
Don't know	10	8	15

When the results are analyzed by groups, nonwhites are most critical of parents in bringing up their children. Respondents living in the West are more critical than those in other sections of the nation, with 37% giving parents a "D" or "Fail" rating as opposed to 22% who give them an "A" or "B" rating.

Parents with children now in school give the parents in their community a generally favorable rating: 33% give them an "A" or "B." On the other end of the scale, however, they rate parents more harshly than they do the local public schools or the principals and administrators. Among this group, "D" or "Fail" ratings for parents totaled 25%, compared to 16% for schools and 17% for principals and administrators.

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
A rating	5	4	6	4
B rating	24	23	27	21
C rating	36	34	38	42
D rating	16	16	17	13
Fail	11	12	8	11
Don't know	8	11	4	9

Preparing Students for Jobs and College

An important measure of a school's effectiveness is how well it prepares students for their immediate future—in school or out. Two questions in this year's survey measure how well the public believes its schools are preparing students to take jobs after graduation, and how well they are preparing students for college.

The results reveal that the public believes the high schools do a better job preparing students for further academic experience than for the world of work.

What grade would you give the public high schools in this community for the job they are doing in preparing students to get a job when they graduate from high school—A, B, C, D, or Fail?

What grade would you give the public high schools in this community for the job they are doing in preparing students for college—A, B, C, D, or Fail?

	How Well They Prepare Students for Jobs	How Well They Prepare Students for College
	%	%
A rating	6	9
B rating	20	25
C rating	29	29
D rating	18	13
Fail	12	9
Don't know	15	15

Low-Interest Loans for College Students

At the time this survey was undertaken, one question before Congress was whether low-interest loans to college students should be limited to those students who come from poor families. The question put to respondents in the survey read as follows:

The federal government now makes available at low interest rates loans to students who attend college. The administration in Washington now thinks the loans should go to students from low-income families only. Should these loans be available to all students or only to students from low-income families?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Limit loans to students from low-income families	36	39	32	24
Do not limit loans	59	56	64	72
Don't know	5	5	4	4

Interestingly, those respondents who identify themselves as Republicans vote 59% to 35% *against* limiting loans, slightly higher than the vote of 57% to 38% given by Democrats.

The Voucher System

The idea of a voucher system, a plan whereby the government allots a certain amount of money for the education of each child regardless of whether the child attends a public, parochial, or independent school, continues to elicit a mixed reception. When this question was first asked in 1970, a slightly higher percentage of respondents opposed the idea than favored it. The same was true in 1971. In the current 1981 survey, however, those in favor hold a slight margin over those opposed.

In some nations, the government allots a certain amount of money for each child for his education. The parents can then send the child to any public, parochial, or private school they choose. This is called the "voucher system." Would you like to see such an idea adopted in this country?

	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
	%	%	%
1970 survey	43	46	11
1971 survey	38	44	18
1981 survey	43	41	16

Among public school parents, however, those who oppose a voucher system still have a slight edge over those who favor it, but the reverse is true among parents of children in nonpublic schools—the group to whom a voucher system is likely to be of the most immediate benefit.

	1981 Survey			
	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor voucher system	43	44	40	47
Oppose voucher system	41	41	42	34
No opinion	16	15	18	19

Further breakdowns:

	Favor	Oppose	No Opinion
	%	%	%
National Totals	43	41	16
Sex			
Men	42	44	14
Women	43	39	18
Race			
White	41	44	15
Nonwhite	54	28	18
Age			
18-29 years	54	34	12
30-49 years	42	41	17
50 years and older	35	48	17
Community Size			
1 million & over	50	33	17
500,000-999,999	48	44	8
50,000-499,999	43	44	13
2,500-49,999	39	46	15
Under 2,500	37	42	21
Central city	49	37	14
Education			
Grade school	37	35	28
High school	45	40	15
College	42	46	12
Region			
East	52	31	17
Midwest	36	48	16
South	37	44	19
West	50	41	9

Using Volunteers To Reduce School Costs

The suggestion that volunteers be used to direct some extracurricular activities in the school—such as coaching athletic events or directing musical or dramatic performances—is regarded favorably by a small majority of those included in the survey. Those who think it is a good idea outnumber those who do not by a ratio of 5 to 4.

Those who are most in favor of using volunteers are found in the East and in the large cities. Those most opposed are residents of cities under 50,000 in population and persons living in the South and in the Midwest.

One way which has been suggested to reduce school costs would be to interest local citizen volunteers to take over all extracurricular activities, such as athletic coaching, directing the band, directing plays, etc. Do you think this is a good idea or a bad idea?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Good idea	52	53	49	54
Bad idea	41	38	46	42
Don't know	7	9	5	4

Further breakdowns:

	Good Idea	Bad Idea	Don't Know
	%	%	%
National Totals	52	41	7
Sex			
Men	47	46	7
Women	56	37	7
Race			
White	51	42	7
Nonwhite	58	34	8
Age			
18-29 years	61	34	5
30-49 years	53	41	6
50 years and older	44	46	10
Community Size			
1 million & over	62	32	6
500,000-999,999	60	36	4
50,000-499,999	58	37	5
2,500-49,999	38	52	10
Under 2,500	41	49	10
Central city	59	34	7
Education			
Grade school	47	38	15
High school	58	36	6
College	52	44	4
Region			
East	64	32	4
Midwest	45	48	7
South	47	42	11
West	53	40	7

The Goals of Education as the Public Sees Them

The goals of education, in the eyes of the public, are greatly influenced by the philosophical climate of the nation and by the perceived needs of the people, which are reflected in the kind of education they seek for their children.

To trace possible changes in the public's perception of the goals of education, this survey repeated the following question from the survey of 1972:

People have different reasons why they want their children to get an education. What are the chief reasons that come to your mind?

It should come as no surprise that the great majority of the nation's citizens continue to believe that economic benefits—getting better jobs or making more money—are the chief goals of education. In fact, on both the 1972 and the 1981 surveys, more than 8 out of 10 respondents cite as one of the main reasons for education the economic benefits gained.

Nearly 6 out of 10 respondents this year, however, cited reasons for getting an education that can be placed in the general category of "personal development." Of special importance in pointing to likely changes in the future are the two trend-setting groups, young people and those with college educations, both of whom cite personal development reasons much more frequently than does the general public.

When the many reasons for getting an education offered in the present survey are compared with those given by respondents in the 1972 survey, one notable difference comes to light. In the earlier survey, the nation was concerned to a much greater extent with the problems of integration. In fact, the second most cited reason 9 years ago was "to get along better with people at all levels of society." A total of 43% gave this as one of their reasons in 1972, but only 11% in the present survey.

On the other hand, such reasons as "become a good citizen," "personal growth," "have a better life," or "prepare them for the future" are more frequently offered as goals of education in the present survey.

The High School Curriculum

Closely tied to the reasons for getting an education—the ends of education—is the question of curriculum design—the means to those ends. And when people are consulted about the courses they believe should be required in high schools, the special areas of instruction they think are important, and the educational objectives they believe should be given greater attention, their requirements are far too extensive to be accommodated in the present school schedule.

It is useful, nevertheless, to obtain the public's views, since educational needs change as new problems and new situations arise that concern the community and the nation. And, at the very least, the views of the people should enable educators to establish priorities.

The increasing educational demands of a society that grows constantly more complex leads to a conclusion that seems warranted: inevitably the school day and the school year must be extended to meet these demands.

Subjects the Public Would Require

In the course of seeking the people's views on the subjects high school students should be required to take, respondents were asked to give their views on the number of years that should be devoted to those subjects they believe should be required.

Since the educational program appropriate for a student who plans to go to college differs from that of a student who plans to go to work immediately after high school graduation, respondents were asked to give their views on the subjects they would require of each of these groups.

A card listing 11 different subjects was handed to each respondent, who was then told by the interviewers:

Would you look over this card, which lists high school subjects. If you were the one to decide, what subjects would you require every public high school student who plans to go to college to take?

The respondent was then asked how many years students should be required to study each subject named.

	Percentage Who Would Require Subject	Number of Years Required *
1. Mathematics	94	4
2. English	91	4
3. History/U.S. government	83	4
4. Science	76	4
5. Business	60	2
6. Foreign language	54	2
7. Health education	47	1 to 2
8. Physical education	44	1 to 2
9. Industrial arts/homemaking	34	2
10. Art	28	2
11. Music	26	1

* The year selected by the greatest number of respondents is the one reported here. This question was asked of those who would require the subject.

The same procedure was followed in the case of students who do not plan to go on to college when they graduate.

What about those public high school students who do not plan to go to college when they graduate? Which courses would you require them to take?

	Percentage Who Would Require Subject	Number of Years Required *
1. Mathematics	91	4
2. English	89	4
3. Business	75	2
4. History/U.S. government	71	2
5. Industrial arts/homemaking	64	4
6. Science	58	2
7. Health education	46	2
8. Physical education	43	4
9. Foreign language	21	2
10. Art	20	1
11. Music	20	1

* The year selected by the greatest number of respondents is the one reported here. This question was asked of those who would require the subject.

Wide Variety of Courses Versus Fewer, More Basic Courses

The public is increasingly in favor of greater emphasis on the basics, judging from the results to a question that asks respondents to choose between two educational policies: offering a wide variety of courses in the high school curriculum, or offering fewer and more basic courses.

The trend is small, however. In 1979 when the question was first posed, 44% of the public favored a wide variety of courses; 49% voted for fewer courses; 7% had no opinion. In the present survey, 43% favor a wide variety of courses; 52% vote for fewer; 5% have no opinion on this issue.

Public high schools can offer students a wide variety of courses, or they can concentrate on fewer basic courses such as English, mathematics, history, and science. Which of these two policies do you think the local high school(s) should follow in planning their curriculum—a wide variety of courses or fewer but more basic courses?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Nonpublic School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor a wide variety of courses	43	41	46	55
Favor fewer, more basic courses	52	53	51	43
No opinion	5	6	3	2

Examination of the results by groups reveals that younger people (ages 18 through 29) are more likely to favor a wide range of curriculum offerings than are people in older age groups. Residents of the largest cities also favor a wide variety of courses, as do blacks. Moreover, the findings indicate that a wide variety of courses tends to gain favor in those cities and communities where the drop-out rate is greatest and in those high schools where traditional courses fail to interest some students.

Further breakdowns:

	Favor a Wide Variety of Courses	Favor Fewer, Basic Courses	No Opinion
	%	%	%
National Totals	43	52	5
Sex			
Men	40	55	5
Women	45	50	5
Race			
White	42	53	5
Nonwhite	48	46	6
Age			
18-29 years	57	40	3
30-49 years	44	52	4
50 years and older	30	62	8
Community Size			
1 million & over	52	42	6
500,000-999,999	47	48	5
50,000-499,999	39	58	3
2,500-49,999	38	56	6
Under 2,500	40	55	5
Central city	44	52	4
Education			
Grade school	29	60	11
High school	46	50	4
College	44	53	3
Region			
East	44	50	6
Midwest	47	51	2
South	41	51	8
West	37	59	4

Special Instruction Areas

High schools offer instruction in many areas, in addition to regular courses. To ascertain how important these areas of special instruction are to the public, we asked the following question:

In addition to regular courses, high schools offer instruction in other areas. As I read off these areas, one at a time, would you tell me whether you feel this instruction should be required or should not be required for all high school students.

The list presented included five areas: driver education, computer training, parent training, alcohol abuse, and drug abuse.

	Should Be Required	Should Not Be Required	No Opinion
	%	%	%
1. Drug abuse	82	15	3
2. Alcohol abuse	78	19	3
3. Driver education	71	28	1
4. Parenting/parent training	64	30	6
5. Computer training	43	51	6

Attitudes of Key Groups

	Age Group 18-29	College Educated	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
1. Drug abuse	87	80	84
2. Alcohol abuse	82	76	79
3. Driver education	73	68	72
4. Parenting/parent training	73	63	63
5. Computer training	41	49	41

Emphasis on High School Athletics

About a third of all adults (34%) believe that too much emphasis is being given to athletics in local public high schools. Only 1 person in 10 holds the view that "too little" attention is being given to high school athletics.

Opinions on this issue vary greatly by age, however. Nearly half (46%) of the oldest respondents say too much emphasis is being given to high school athletics in their community, but only 28% of those aged 18 to 29 agree.

People living in the smallest communities—those under 2,500 in population—are much more likely to think that too much attention is being given to high school sports than are people living in the major cities. A total of 43% of the respondents in the smallest communities say too much emphasis is being given to high school athletics; only 23% of those living in cities over 1 million agree with this viewpoint.

Do you think too much, too little, or about the right amount of emphasis is being given to athletics in the public high schools in this community?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Too much emphasis	34	35	33	19
Too little	10	9	9	12
Right amount	49	46	53	61
No opinion	7	10	5	8

State Board Examinations for Teachers

The public overwhelmingly supports the proposal to require teachers, in addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, to pass state board examinations in the subjects they are hired to teach.

When this question was first asked in 1979, 85% approved of such a requirement. In the current survey, almost exactly the same approval vote was registered—84%.

No substantial differences are found by region of the nation, race, sex, or any major breakdown.

In addition to meeting college requirements for a teacher's certificate, should those who want to become teachers also be required to pass a state board examination to prove their knowledge in the subject(s) they will teach before they are hired?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they should	84	84	84	86
No	11	10	12	8
Don't know/no answer	5	6	4	6

Tenure for Teachers

Throughout this series, when the question of teacher tenure has been put to the public, the results show that those who oppose tenure greatly outnumber those who favor it.

The issue is obviously complex, and three different wordings have been devised to present the issue fairly. But in each survey that included the question (1972, 1974, and 1981), those who disapprove of tenure were found to outnumber those who approve of it by a substantial margin.

Most public school teachers have tenure; that is, after a two- or three-year period, they receive what amounts to a lifetime contract. Do you approve or disapprove of this policy?

	Approve	Disapprove	No Opinion
	%	%	%
1972 survey	28	61	11
1974 survey	31	56	13
1981 survey	28	63	9

In this year's survey, parents of children who attend nonpublic schools disapprove of tenure by a larger margin than do parents of public school children.

	1981 Survey			
	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Approve of tenure	28	28	28	24
Disapprove of tenure	63	61	61	69
No opinion	9	11	11	7

Examination of the results by groups reveals a difference of opinion between whites—26% of whom favor tenure—and nonwhites—41% of whom approve of the policy.

Should Public School Teachers Be Permitted To Strike?

Parelleling the rise in teacher strikes is an increasing attitude on the part of the public that teachers should *not* be permitted to strike.

The question has been asked four times in this series: in 1969, 1975, 1980, and 1981. The first survey used an "open" question, which asked if public school teachers should have the right to strike. The results showed 37% saying "yes"; 59% saying "no"; and 4% having no opinion.

In the last three surveys on this issue, a "yes or no" question has been used instead:

Should public school teachers be permitted to strike or not?

Between 1969 and 1975, public opinion shifted somewhat toward greater acceptance of the teacher's right to strike, but by this year, the pendulum had swung back again, as the following survey findings indicate:

	1975	1980	1981
	%	%	%
Yes, they should be permitted to strike	45	40	37
No, they should not	48	52	56
No opinion	7	8	7

	1981 Survey			
	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, they should be permitted to strike	37	38	35	37
No, they should not	56	5	58	61
No opinion	7	7	7	2

Despite the increase in the national totals of those who believe teachers should not be allowed to strike, the trend-setting groups, those 18 to 29 in age and those with college educations, are more likely to grant teachers the right to strike. The same is true of nonwhites.

Further breakdowns:

	Yes	No	Don't Know
	%	%	%
National Totals	37	56	7
Sex			
Men	38	57	5
Women	36	55	9
Race			
White	35	58	7
Nonwhite	47	47	6
Age			
18-29 years	48	46	6
30-49 years	38	56	6
50 years and older	28	63	9
Community Size			
1 million & over	40	55	5
500,000-999,999	45	48	7
50,000-499,999	38	53	9
2,500-49,999	31	60	9
Under 2,500	32	62	6
Central city	41	52	7
Education			
Grade school	23	64	13
High school	37	57	6
College	43	52	5
Region			
East	37	58	5
Midwest	39	56	5
South	35	54	11
West	38	56	6

Has Unionization of Teachers Helped or Hurt the Quality of Education?

The public remains ambivalent on the question of whether the unionization of teachers has helped or hurt the quality of public school education. And changes in the public's attitudes on this point have been slight during the last five years.

In 1976, the following question was included in the survey:

Most teachers in the nation now belong to unions or associations that bargain over salaries, working conditions, and the like. Has unionization, in your opinion, helped, hurt or made no difference in the quality of public school education in the United States?

When the same question was asked in the present survey to register trends, if any, analysis of the overall results indicates that public attitudes have not changed significantly.

	Has Helped Quality	Has Hurt Quality	Made No Difference	No Opinion
	%	%	%	%
1976 survey	22	38	27	13
1981 survey	18	37	33	12

	1981 Survey			
	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Unionization has helped education	18	18	17	21
Unionization has hurt education	37	39	34	33
Made no difference	33	31	36	36
No opinion	12	12	13	10

Breakdowns of the responses by group show that, as with approval of the teacher's right to strike, those who are most likely to believe that unionization has improved the quality of education include nonwhites, young people, and people with college educations.

Further breakdowns:

	Has Helped Quality	Has Hurt	No Difference	No Opinion
	%	%	%	%
National Totals	18	37	33	12
Sex				
Men	20	40	32	8
Women	17	35	33	15
Race				
White	16	39	33	12
Nonwhite	33	23	32	12
Age				
18-29 years	23	31	36	10
30-49 years	16	38	35	11
50 years and older	16	42	29	13
Community Size				
1 million & over	15	35	42	8
500,000-999,999	24	23	39	14
50,000-499,999	21	36	31	12
2,500-49,999	14	36	37	13
Under 2,500	17	47	24	12
Central city	22	30	37	11
Education				
Grade school	15	43	24	18
High school	18	35	35	12
College	20	38	35	7
Region				
East	18	38	34	10
Midwest	18	38	36	8
South	20	35	28	17
West	17	37	34	12

Teacher Age and Effectiveness

An issue of long-standing interest in the educational world is whether teachers, in general, are more effective in their early years of teaching, when they are fresh from up-to-date preparation programs, or later in their careers, when they have been seasoned by on-the-job experience.

Effectiveness as a teacher is clearly related to individual abilities and characteristics. Still, some hold that younger teachers are more sensitive to the needs and interests of their students—in greater rapport with them—because of being closer in age. Others hold that greater experience in the classroom gives the older teacher the advantage.

At a time when declining enrollments are leading to reductions in force in many school districts and a resulting rise in the average age of teachers, it is interesting to explore the public's view of age in relation to effectiveness.

Looking back on your own school experience, did you find, in general, that the most effective teachers were under 40 years of age, or over 40 years of age?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Teachers under 40 were better	32	32	32	36
Teachers over 40 were better	43	41	47	32
Same	21	22	18	27
No opinion	4	5	3	5

Further examination of the findings by groups in the population shows that respondents in the youngest age bracket—those 18 to 29—say younger teachers were better, in their experience. And perhaps it is not surprising that those in the oldest age bracket—50 and over—hold the opposite view.

Equal Educational Opportunities

The large majority of Americans—8 out of 10—feel that equal opportunities exist for all racial groups in their community.

Little difference in attitudes is noted between the nation as a whole, public and nonpublic school parents, and those with no children in the public schools.

Do you think that students from all racial groups have equal educational opportunity in this community?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, equal	79	79	83	71
No, not equal	15	14	13	23
Don't know	6	7	4	6

Those respondents who felt that certain racial groups did not have equal opportunities were asked to name these groups. The most frequently mentioned were blacks and Hispanics. About 1 American in 10 (8%) mentioned blacks and 1 in 20 (5%) mentioned Hispanics.

Analysis of the findings shows very little difference in attitudes by various socioeconomic groups. In every population segment, between 75% and 85% feel that all the races have equal opportunity. And, in every group, the two most frequently mentioned races having unequal educational opportunities are blacks and Hispanics.

One important exception is noted in the analysis by demographics, however. Perceptions about educational opportunities are significantly different among the black population of America. Only 60% of blacks—as opposed to 82% of whites—feel that they are given equal educational opportunities. And almost 3 in 10 (28%) feel they are not treated as equals in education.

Similarly, when asked which groups are discriminated against, 21% of black respondents mention blacks and 14% say Hispanics.

Nationwide Examination for Graduation

Increasing support is found for requiring high school students to pass a standard examination to receive a high school diploma.

The current survey findings on this issue show that 7 in 10 of the U.S. public (69%) would favor such an exam—a substantial 19-point increase since the question was first asked in 1958. The increase in support was 15 percentage points between 1958 and 1976, from 50% to 65%. A further 4-point increase has been registered between the 1976 and the 1981 studies.

Should all high school students in the United States be required to pass a standard nationwide examination in order to get a high school diploma?

	1981	1976	1958
	%	%	%
Favor such a test	69	65	50
Oppose such a test	26	31	39
No opinion	5	4	11

Interestingly, respondents with no children in the schools are as much in favor of the exam as are parents.

	1981 Survey			
	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Favor such a test	69	69	67	67
Oppose such a test	26	25	30	29
No opinion	5	6	3	4

Analysis of the findings by socioeconomic groups reveals that 60% or more in every major population group support a nationwide standardized exam, with the highest level of support in the West (76%). One important change in the findings is that the college educated are currently as much in favor of a standardized exam as are their less well-educated counterparts, while in the two previous surveys, it was the high school and grade school educated respondents who were most in favor of such a requirement.

Further breakdowns:

	Favor Such a Test	Oppose Such a Test	No Opinion
	%	%	%
National Totals	69	26	5
Sex			
Men	68	28	4
Women	70	24	6
Race			
White	69	26	5
Nonwhite	63	29	8
Age			
18-29 years	64	30	6
30-49 years	70	26	4
50 years and older	70	24	6
Community Size			
1 million & over	71	23	6
500,000-999,999	69	24	7
50,000-499,999	70	25	5
2,500-49,999	65	30	5
Under 2,500	66	30	4
Central city	68	25	7
Education			
Grade school	66	26	8
High school	69	25	6
College	69	29	2
Region			
East	71	23	6
Midwest	62	32	6
South	68	27	5
West	76	21	3

Release of Exam Results

Those respondents who expressed support for a standardized nationwide examination were then asked if they felt that the exam results should be made public. The results for the nation as a whole show that more than half (53%) of those in favor of the exam also felt the results should be reported in the press.

Majority support for public dissemination of the exam results is seen in most population groups and is particularly high among the college-educated group. Two-thirds (66%) of the college educated vote in favor of releasing test scores —as compared to 48% of high school graduates and 45% with a grammar school education.

Again, support for public dissemination is virtually the same for nonparents as it is for parents of public school children.

Do you feel that the results of a nationwide examination should, or should not, be released to the press and made public?

Based on Those Favoring a Nationwide Exam	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, should be made public	53	53	52	56
No, should not be	43	42	45	42
Don't know	4	5	3	2

Comparison of Exam Results Between Schools

Those respondents who favored public reporting of the results of a standardized exam were then asked whether the results should be compared with the scores of other public schools with similar racial and economic makeup.

Support for the published comparisons is virtually unanimous: 91% for the nation and 90% or above for all population segments.

As an aid to interpreting these results, do you feel the results for each school should, or should not, show how their results compare with other schools that have a similar racial and economic make-up?

Based on Those Who Favor Exam and Favor Release	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, should show comparisons	91	90	91	90
No, should not	7	7	6	8
Don't know	2	3	3	2

Smoking in the Public Schools

Americans by large majorities favor a ban on smoking in the public schools—for teachers and administrative staff as well as for students.

Nationally, 7 out of 10 (71%) vote for prohibiting smoking by students anywhere on school property—in the buildings or on school grounds. And almost as large a majority (60%) would prohibit public school teachers and administrators from smoking on school property.

Only 1 respondent in 4 nationally would be opposed to a ban on smoking by students in schools, and 1 in 3 would be against prohibiting teachers and staff from smoking.

How do you feel about smoking in public school buildings and on public school property? Do you feel that students should be prohibited from smoking in these places or not?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, should prohibit	71	70	72	71
No, should not	25	25	24	28
No opinion	4	5	4	1

Do you feel that teachers and the administrative staff should be prohibited from smoking in these places or not?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parents
	%	%	%	%
Yes, should prohibit	60	62	56	55
No, should not	34	31	40	40
No opinion	6	7	4	5

Analysis of the findings by various socioeconomic groups indicates that support for a smoking ban for both students and staff is remarkably consistent. Majorities vote for prohibiting smoking by students by 60% to 76% in every major population group, with the highest level of support found in the West (76%). Similarly, majority support for prohibiting smoking by teachers and staff is found in every important population segment.

Do Parents Want More Influence in Deciding School Policies?

An important minority of parents believe they should have more influence in determining public school policies. But when confronted with a half dozen areas in which they might exercise greater influence, more parents say they are satisfied with the present situation or say that parents should have *less* influence, than say they should have more.

The six areas on which parents' views were sought include: 1) curriculum, 2) hiring of teachers, 3) hiring of administrators and principals, 4) books and instructional materials, 5) books placed in school libraries, and 6) teachers' and administrators' salaries.

No single area, except the selection and hiring of administrators and principals, found as many as 40% voting for more influence. And in this case only 41% said they thought parents should have more say in this area.

Do you feel that parents of public school students should have more say, less say, or do they have about the right amount of say about the following areas in the public schools?

	More Say	Less Say	Right Amount	No Opinion
	%	%	%	%
1. The curriculum, i.e., the courses offered	38	8	43	11
2. The selection and hiring of teachers	34	14	41	11
3. The selection and hiring of administrators and principals	41	13	35	11
4. The books and instructional materials	37	10	41	12
5. The books placed in the school libraries	33	10	43	14
6. Teacher and administrator salaries	31	11	43	15

	Attitudes of Key Groups		
	Age Group 18–34	College Educated	Public School Parents
	%	%	%
1. The curriculum			
Parents should have more say	39	36	38
Less say	8	8	8
Now have right amount	34	47	44
No opinion	19	9	10
2. Hiring of teachers			
Parents should have more say	33	30	34
Less say	12	13	13
Now have right amount	40	49	42
No opinion	15	8	11
3. Hiring of administrators/principals			
Parents should have more say	38	38	39
Less say	11	12	13
Now have right amount	35	40	36
No opinion	16	10	12
4. Books and instructional materials			
Parents should have more say	39	30	36
Less say	6	11	10
Now have right amount	39	49	42
No opinion	16	10	12
5. Books placed in the school libraries			
Parents should have more say	33	26	32
Less say	6	11	10
Now have right amount	42	51	45
No opinion	19	12	13
6. Teacher and administrator salaries			
Parents should have more say	35	35	29
Less say	12	12	12
Now have right amount	35	41	44
No opinion	18	12	15

Are We Losing the Lead in Science and Technology to Japan and Germany?

More adults in the nation agree that we are losing our lead in science and technology to the Japanese and Germans than hold the opposite view.

The general public, by a ratio of 48% to 38%, believe we are losing the lead, and persons in the professional and business group, by a ratio of 53% to 39%, also take this position. Those who have attended college also agree, by a ratio of 52% to 37%.

Older persons—those 50 and over—and those with only a grade school education disagree by a small margin.

Some observers say that the United States is losing its lead in science and technology to Japan and Germany. Do you think this is true or not true?

	National Totals	No Children in School	Public School Parents	Non-public School Parent
	%	%	%	%
U.S. is losing lead	48	46	51	60
U.S. is *not* losing lead	38	38	38	30
No opinion	14	16	11	10

Composition of the Sample

Adults	%
No children in school	65
Public school parents	31*
Nonpublic school parents	6*

* Total exceeds 35% because some parents have children attending more than one kind of school.

Sex	%
Men	48
Women	52

Race	%
White	87
Nonwhite	13

Religion	%
Protestant	57
Catholic	28
Jewish	2
Other	13

Age	%
18-24 years	17
25-29 years	11
30-49 years	36
50 years and over	36
Undesignated	*

* Less than one-half of 1 percent.

Occupation	%
Business and professional	27
Clerical and sales	7
Farm	3
Skilled labor	19
Unskilled labor	21
Nonlabor force	17
Undesignated	6

Political Affiliation	%
Republican	25
Democrat	40
Independent	32
Other	3

Income	%
$20,000 & over	42
$15,000-$19,999	14
$10,000-$14,999	19
$ 7,000-$ 9,999	8
$ 5,000-$ 6,999	6
$ 3,000-$ 4,999	6
Under $3,000	4
Undesignated	1

Region	%
East	25
Midwest	28
South	28
West	19

Community Size	%
1 million & over	20
500,000-999,999	13
50,000-499,999	25
2,500-49,999	14
Under 2,500	28

Education	%
Elementary grades	14
High school incomplete	16
High school complete	34
Technical, trade, or business school	5
College incomplete	16
College graduate	15
Undesignated	*

* Less than one-half of 1 percent.

The Design of the Sample

The sampling procedure is designed to produce an approximation of the adult civilian population, 18 years and older, living in the United States, except for those persons in institutions such as prisons or hospitals.

The design of the sample is that of a replicated probability sample, down to the block level in the case of urban areas, and to segments of townships in the case of rural areas. Approximately 300 sampling locations are used in each survey. Interpenetrating samples can be provided for any given study when appropriate.

The sample design included stratification by these four size-of-community strata, using 1970 census data: a) cities of population 1,000,000 and over; b) 250,000 to 999,999; c) 50,000 to 249,999; d) all other populations. Each of these strata was further stratified into seven geographic regions: New England, Middle Atlantic, East Central, West Central, South, Mountain, and Pacific. Within each city-size regional stratum, the population was arrayed in geographic order and zoned into equal-sized groups of sampling units. Pairs of localities were selected in each zone, with probability of selection of each locality proportional to its population size in the 1970 census, producing two replicated samples of localities.

Within localities so selected for which the requisite population data are reported, subdivisions were drawn with the probability of selection proportional to size of population. In all other localities, small definable geographic areas were selected with equal probability.

Separately for each survey, within each subdivision so selected for which block statistics are available, a sample of blocks or block clusters is drawn with probability of selection proportional to the number of dwelling units. In all other subdivisions or areas, blocks or segments are drawn at random or with equal probability.

In each cluster of blocks and each segment so selected, a randomly selected starting point is designated on the interviewer's map of the area. Starting at this point, interviewers are required to follow a given direction in the selection of households until their assignment is completed.

Interviewing is conducted at times when adults, in general, are most likely to be at home, which means on weekends or, if on weekdays, after 4:00 p.m. for women and after 6:00 p.m. for men.

Allowance for persons not at home is made by a "times-at-home" weighting procedure rather than by "call-backs." This procedure is a standard method for reducing the sample bias that would otherwise result from underrepresentation in the sample of persons who are difficult to find at home.

The prestratification by regions is routinely supplemented by fitting each obtained sample to the latest available Census Bureau estimates of the regional distribution of the population. Also, minor adjustments of the samples are made by educational attainment by men and women separately, based on the annual estimates of the Census Bureau (derived from their Current Population Survey) and by age.

Sampling Tolerances

In interpreting survey results, it should be borne in mind that all sample surveys are subject to sampling error, that is, the extent to which the results may differ from what would be obtained if the whole population surveyed had been interviewed. The size of such sampling errors depends largely on the number of interviews.

The following tables may be used in estimating the sampling error of any percentage in this report. The computed allowances have taken into account the effect of the sample design upon sampling error. They may be interpreted as indicating the range (plus or minus the figure shown) within which the results of repeated samplings in the same time period could be expected to vary, 95% of the time, assuming the same sampling procedure, the same interviewers, and the same questionnaire.

The first table shows how much allowance should be made for the sampling error of a percentage:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of a Percentage

	In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)* Sample Size						
	1,500	1,000	750	600	400	200	100
Percentages near 10	2	2	3	3	4	5	7
Percentages near 20	2	3	4	4	5	7	9
Percentages near 30	3	4	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 40	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 50	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 60	3	4	4	5	6	8	11
Percentages near 70	3	4	4	4	6	8	10
Percentages near 80	2	3	4	4	5	7	9
Percentages near 90	2	2	3	3	4	5	7

* The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

The table would be used in the following manner: Let us say a reported percentage is 33 for a group which includes 1,500 respondents. Then we go to row "percentages near 30" in the table, and go across to the column headed "1,500." The number at this point is 3, which means that the 33% obtained in the sample is subject to a sampling error of plus or minus 3 points. Another way of saying it is that very probably (95 chances out of 100) the average of repeated samplings would be somewhere between 30 and 36, with the most likely figure the 33 obtained.

In comparing survey results in two samples, such as, for example, men and women, the question arises as to how large the difference between them must be before one can be reasonably sure that it reflects a real difference. In the tables below, the number of points that must be allowed for in such comparisons is indicated.

Two tables are provided. One is for percentages near 20 or 80; the other for percentages near 50. For percentages in between, the error to be allowed for is between those shown in the two tables:

Recommended Allowance for Sampling Error of the Difference

In Percentage Points (at 95 in 100 confidence level)*

TABLE A Percentages near 20 or percentages near 80

Size of Sample	750	600	400	200
750	5			
600	5	6		
400	6	6	7	
200	8	8	8	10

TABLE B Percentages near 50

Size of Sample	750	600	400	200
750	6			
600	7	7		
400	7	8	8	
200	10	10	10	12

* The chances are 95 in 100 that the sampling error is not larger than the figures shown.

Here is an example of how the tables would be used: Let us say that 50% of men respond a certain way and 40% of women respond that way also, for a difference of 10 percentage points between them. Can we say with any assurance that the 10-point difference reflects a real difference between men and women on the question? The sample contains approximately 750 men and 750 women.

Since the percentages are near 50, we consult Table B, and since the two samples are about 750 persons each, we look for the number in the column headed "750," which is also in the row designated "750." We find the number 6 here. This means that the allowance for error should be 6 points, and that in concluding that the percentage among men is somewhere between 4 and 16 points higher than the percentage among women, we should be wrong only about 5% of the time. In other words, we can conclude with considerable confidence that a difference exists in the direction observed and that it amounts to at least 4 percentage points.

If, in another case, men's responses amount to 22%, say, and women's 24%, we consult Table A because these percentages are near 20. We look in the column headed "750" and see that the number is 5. Obviously, then, the 2-point difference is inconclusive.

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